

# **The Bard. A Pindaric Ode**

Thomas Gray

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## Advertisement

The following Ode is founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that Edward the First, when he compleated the Conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death.

### I

`Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!  
Confusion on thy banners wait,  
Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing  
They mock the air with idle state.  
Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail,

Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail  
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,  
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!  
Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride

Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,  
As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side  
He wound with toilsome march his long array.  
Stout Gloucester stood aghast in speechless trance:  
`To arms!' cried Mortimer, and couched his quivering lance.

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On a rock, whose haughty brow  
Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
Robed in the sable garb of woe,  
With haggard eyes the poet stood;  
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air)  
And with a master's hand, and prophet's fire,

Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.  
`Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,

Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!

O'er thee, oh king! their hundred arms they wave,  
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;  
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,  
To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.

`Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,  
That hushed the stormy main:  
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:  
Mountains, ye mourn in vain  
Modred, whose magic song  
Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topped head.  
On dreary Arvon's shore they lie,  
Smeared with gore, and ghastly pale:  
Far, far aloof the affrighted ravens sail;  
The famished eagle screams, and passes by.  
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,  
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,  
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,  
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries  
No more I weep. They do not sleep.  
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,  
I see them sit, they linger yet,  
Avengers of their native land:  
With me in dreadful harmony they join,  
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.'

||

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"Weave the warp, and weave the woof,  
The winding-sheet of Edward's race.  
Give ample room, and verge enough  
The characters of hell to trace.  
Mark the year and mark the night,  
When Severn shall re-echo with affright  
The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs that ring,  
Shrieks of an agonising king!  
She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,  
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,  
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs  
The scourge of heaven. What terrors round him wait!  
Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,  
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

"Mighty victor, mighty lord,  
Low on his funeral couch he lies!  
No pitying heart, no eye, afford  
A tear to grace his obsequies.  
Is the sable warrior fled?

Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.  
The swarm that in thy noon-tide beam were born?  
Gone to salute the rising morn.  
Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,  
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm  
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;  
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;  
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,  
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening-prey.

"Fill high the sparkling bowl,  
The rich repast prepare,  
Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:  
Close by the regal chair  
Fell Thirst and Famine scowl  
A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.  
Heard ye the din of battle bray,  
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?  
Long years of havoc urge their destined course,  
And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.  
Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,  
With many a foul and midnight murder fed,  
Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,  
And spare the meek usurper's holy head.  
Above, below, the rose of snow,  
Twined with her blushing foe, we spread:  
The bristled Boar in infant-gore

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Wallows beneath the thorny shade.

Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom,  
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.



"Edward, lo! to sudden fate  
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)  
Half of thy heart we consecrate.  
(The web is wove. The work is done.)"  
`Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn  
Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn:  
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,  
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.  
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height  
Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?  
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,  
Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!  
No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.  
All-hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue, hail!

`Girt with many a baron bold  
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;  
And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old  
In bearded majesty, appear.  
In the midst a form divine!  
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line;  
Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,  
Attempered sweet to virgin-grace.  
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,  
What strains of vocal transport round her play!  
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;  
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.  
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,  
Waves in the eye of heaven her many-coloured wings.

`The verse adorn again  
Fierce war and faithful love,  
And truth severe, by fairy fiction dressed.  
In buskined measures move  
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,

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With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.  
A voice, as of the cherub-choir,  
Gales from blooming Eden bear;  
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,  
That lost in long futurity expire.  
Fond impious man, think'st thou, yon sanguine cloud,  
Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?  
Tomorrow he repairs the golden flood,  
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.  
Enough for me: with joy I see  
The different doom our fates assign.  
Be thine despair and sceptered care;  
To triumph, and to die, are mine.'  
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height  
Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.